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WLW
CINCINNATI

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

115
P.M. - E.S.T

A SERIES OF DRAMATIZATIONS OF BETTER LAND USE.

No. 187

"BLOOM IN FLATHEAD VALLEY"

November 22, 1942

ORGAN THEME: DEEP RIVER

VOICE

We took it for granted that land was everlasting;

We said ownership of the land insured security.

Tools would wear out, men would die --

But the land would remain.

ORGAN: ABRUPT DISCORD

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: DEEP RIVER, fading behind...

ANNOUNCER

Every Montana schoolchild knows that the name of the state means "mountain", and mountains there are, many of whose streams and ridges have never been seen by man. Wander through Montana, through a thick forest of lodgepole pine or Engelmann's spruce, with slender streams descending in long, graceful plunges from a heavily timbered mountain-side. Color is everywhere in this untouched wilderness. Distant wooded slopes are deep purple beyond the dark grass of nearer slopes.

(ANNOUNCER CONTINUES)

1875

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ANNOUNCER (CONT'D.)

Light green cottonwood and willow border the stream. Red-brown and blue-gray rocks and slaty to auburn logs are partly covered by the red, green, and yellow of flowering and berry-bearing overgrowth. Brown and yellow conifer needles carpet the entire area. Montana! Montana....(FADE)

ORGAN: Up and segue into symbolic music....

SECOND VOICE

Montana....and beyond the western mountains lies a land of rich valleys, small thriving cities, and uncounted mineral treasures. Here are immensities of dead brown grass and gray stubble. Tank towns are there, and cattle and wheat. Wheat, yes, wheat. For in some years wheat alone exceeds the state's entire mineral output. Tank towns are there, and cattle and badlands, coyotes, rattlesnakes, -- and dust.

SOUND: Sneak in wind, keep it rising with ORGAN...

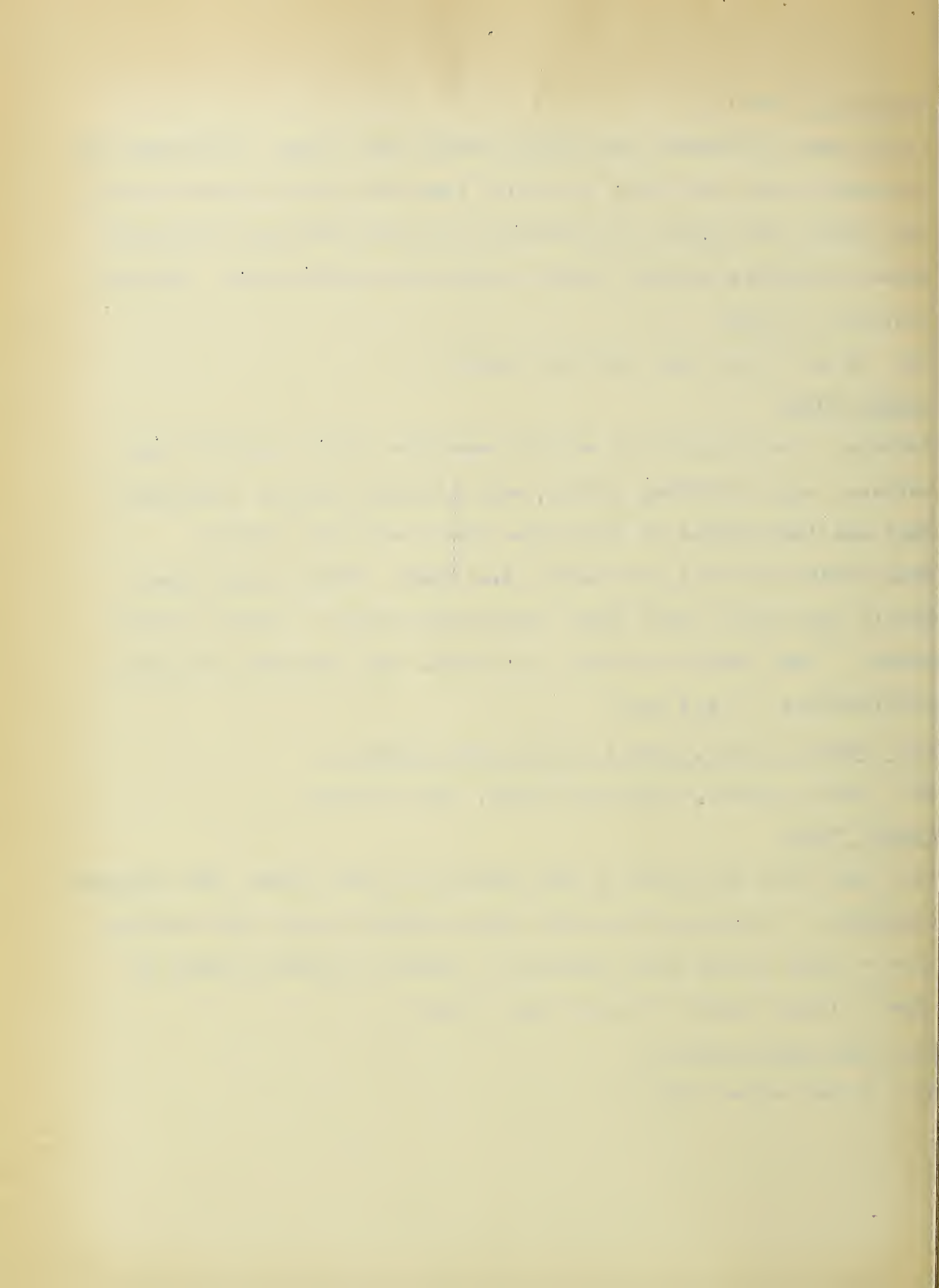
ORGAN: Start ominous, rumbling chords, keep rising...

SECOND VOICE

Yes, dust like they have in the Dakotas, in west Texas, the Oklahoma panhandle -- stinging dust that draws unbidden tears from burning eyes -- sand clouds that threaten to smother stubborn flames of hope -- black clouds of dust, dust, dust!

SOUND: Out completely....

ORGAN: Up and segue into....



THIRD VOICE

And there is Flathead Valley. I don't know where it got its name -- from the Indians, I suppose, for there were many Indians -- the Sioux, the Blackfeet, the Chippewa -- many others. You see, Flathead Valley has gone through a cycle -- a land of forests, then cut-over stumps, then hit-or-miss farming, abandonment, then a rich agricultural region. Flathead Lake with its cold blue waters is the southern boundary of this narrow valley nestling at the foot of the Continental Divide on the east, the Wolf Mountain Range on the west, and the Whitefish Range on the north. Today, it holds the destiny of 300 families, does Flathead Valley.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER (cold)

One of those families reached Flathead Valley after an arduous voyage -- a voyage that ended in sadness, for Sarah Stevens was dying. She lay in her husband's arms, on this warm night on Moccasin Mountain... (FADE)....

DON (almost whispering)

See over there, Sarah? Those lights?

SARAH (she coughs frequently during following sequence)

That must be Columbia Falls.

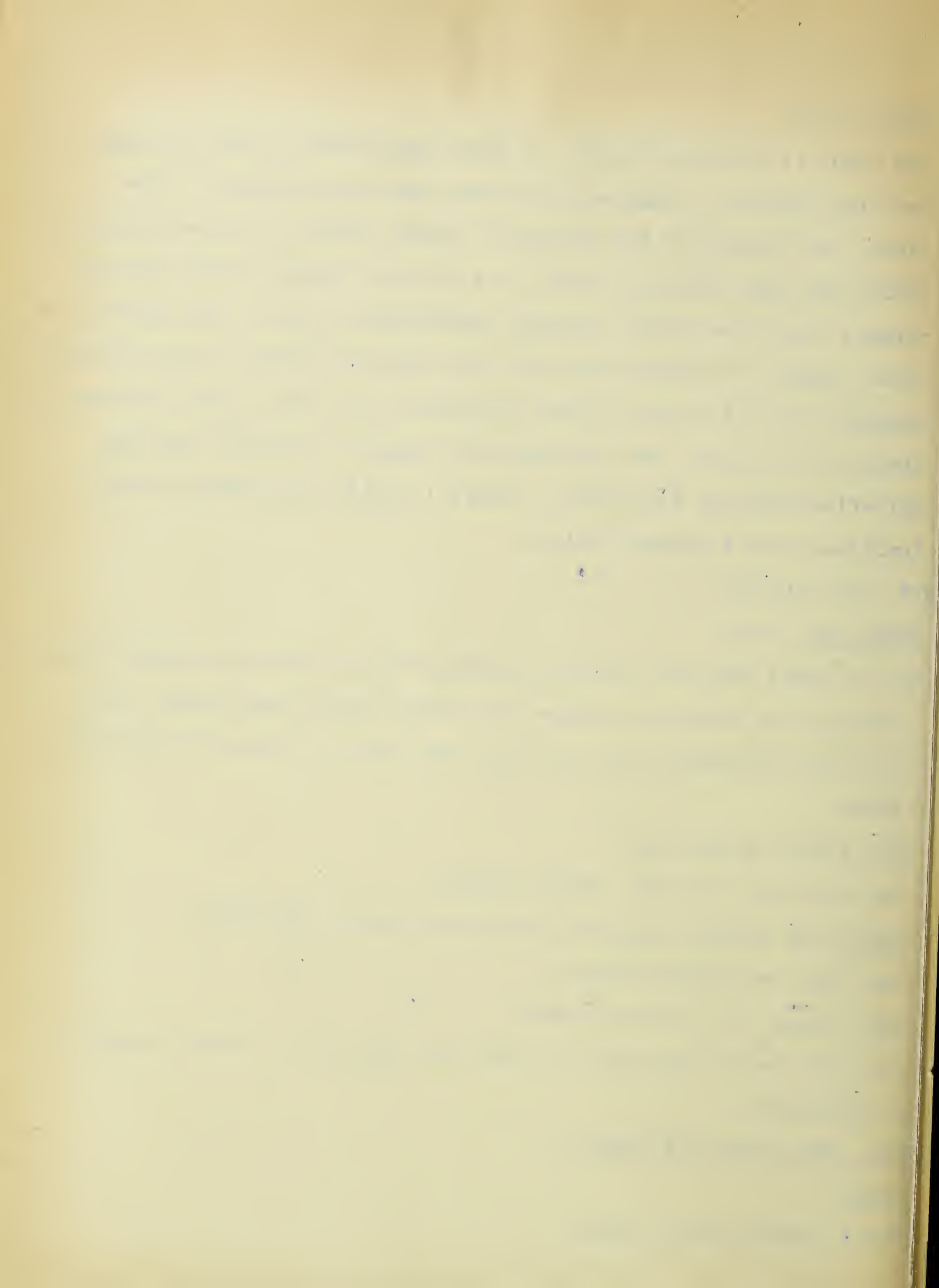
DON (trying to be enthusiastic)

And over there's Whitefish -- and that big place -- that's bound to be Kalispell!

SOUND: Baby cries off mike...

SARAH

Who's looking after Ellen?



DON

She's all right. Judith and George are both with her.

SARAH

I'm thankful I reached the valley, Don, even if I won't ever get down into it.

DON

Now you stop that nonsense, Sarah. You'll feel better in the morning.

SARAH

This is as far as I can go, Don.

DON

You mustn't talk like that!

SARAH

Take care of them, Don.

DON

Of course. Oh, Sarah, Sarah.

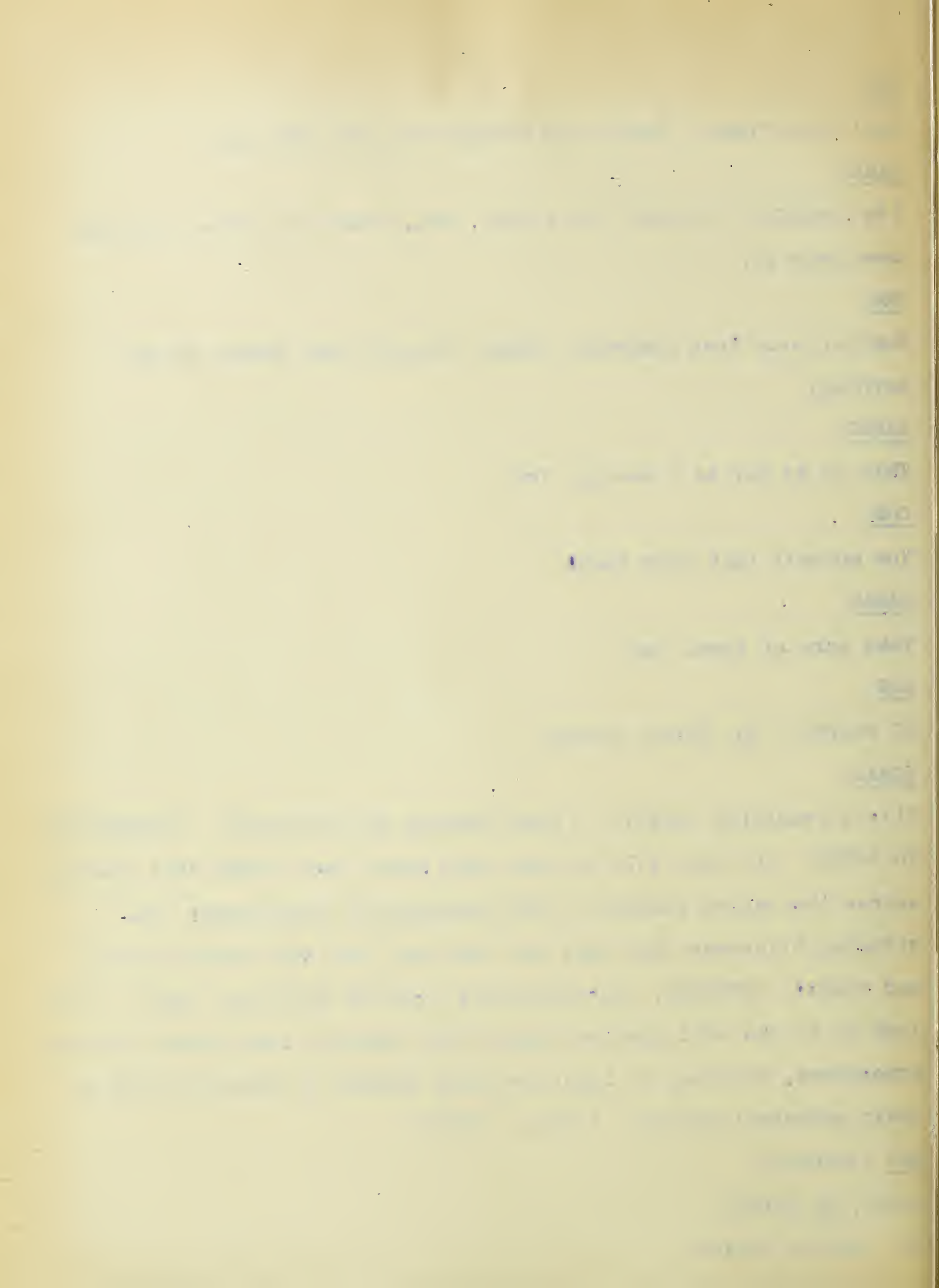
SARAH

It's a beautiful valley. A park between the mountains. (ATTEMPTING TO LAUGH) At least I'll be away from those dust storms that stretch across the entire country....the scurrying of tumbleweeds, the stinging blizzards that blot out the sun, dust that buries fences and roads! (QUIETLY) But from here I can be with you, John. I can look up at the cold granite tops of the forests, the clarity of their atmosphere, the play of light and dark shadows on them that add to their perpetual beauty. I can....(FADE)

DON (sobbing)

Sarah, my Sarah.

ORGAN: Softly behind...



DON (on cue)

I'm not much at making words, dear Lord, but we're giving Sarah to you. We're leaving her up here, Lord, where she can look down and guide in our new life. This little old sign here, "Sarah McGee, the best wife and the best mother anybody ever did have, died in August 1939 looking out over the land that was to have been hers, rest in peace", well this sign just about says it all, dear Lord. Amen.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

SOUND: Old motor car wheezing to halt...

DON

This is as good a place as any to park -- 'til we can get our bearings.

GEORGE

Betcha that man over there can tell us. Man alive! Ain't he homelier'n a sheared sheep. Hey, mister!

YOU BET

You bet.

GEORGE

We was wondering if you could tell us where...

DON

Shut up, George, before I whale you one.

YOU BET

My! My! From the looks of things, you've come a long ways.

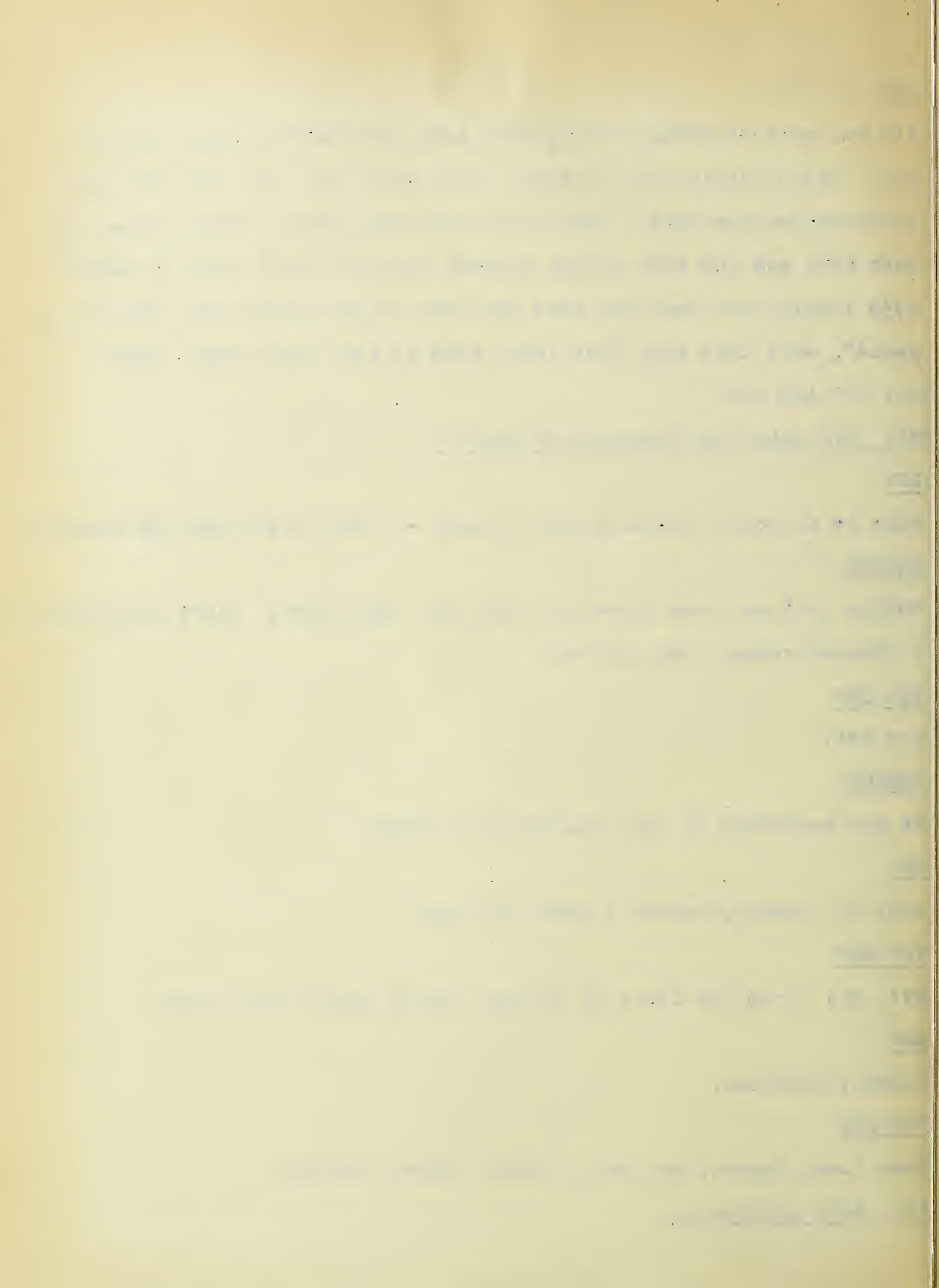
DON

Guymon, Oklahoma.

YOU BET

Some town, Guymon, you bet. Hello, there, pardner!

SOUND: Baby gurgles....



YOU BET

Where's his maw?

DON

We buried her...up there...last night.

YOU BET

Oh. I'm sorry. Anyways I can help.

DON

Where's the land office? I want to register a deed.

YOU BET

It's just about as far as you can throw a rock three times, pardner.
Right over there next that green building. The one with the U. S.
flag flying over it.

GEORGE

I see it, Dad.

DON

Oh, yes.

YOU BET

Pardner?

DON

Yes?

YOU BET

Hope you won't think I'm nosey, but...well....

DON

Something you want to tell me?

YOU BET

You bet there is. If 'twarn't for them three kids, I'd shut up my
trap and be on my way, but there's something you ought to know.

DON

Then for goodness sakes tell us -- we're desperate.

YOU BET

You bet I will. Now you take Whitefish over there across the lake. It's a nice sort of town. Sort of headquarters for the lake, and for the Kootenai National Forest, and there's some work around the railroad shops and sawmills.

DON

Yes, but...

YOU BET

Then there's Kalispell here. It's more of a farming^{and} trading center, what farming there is. I hate to tell you, pardner, but there's no gold around here any more.

GEORGE

But we're not looking for gold! We're farmers.

YOU BET

Farmers?

GEORGE

Sure! We've got the deed to a farm in Flathead Valley right here with us! Show it to him, dad!

YOU BET

Well, I'll be...you bet your boots and save your socks for Sunday if that don't beat all! I was taking you for a bunch of tinhorn prospectors!

DON (laughing softly)

Yes, we lost what little we had in the dust bowl, and we heard there were possibilities up here.

YOU BET

It takes three things to make a go of farming in the valley, pardner. Get rid of the stumps, drain the land, and work yourself to the bone. I know. I'm a farmer myself.

DON

You are?

YOU BET

You bet. A farmer without a farm. I know every ridge and every coulee in Flathead Valley.

DON (hopefully)

Got a house?

YOU BET

Nope. Most of the folks who worked the stump land at first didn't aim to stay long. About all I've got is a passel of farming machinery and the best pair of muscles in the Valley, you can bet that.

GEORGE (bursting in)

Hey, dad! Look at that cow! Riding in the back end of a car.

YOU BET

Young fellow, likely as not that cow paid for that car. She ought to get to ride in 'er once in a while.

DON

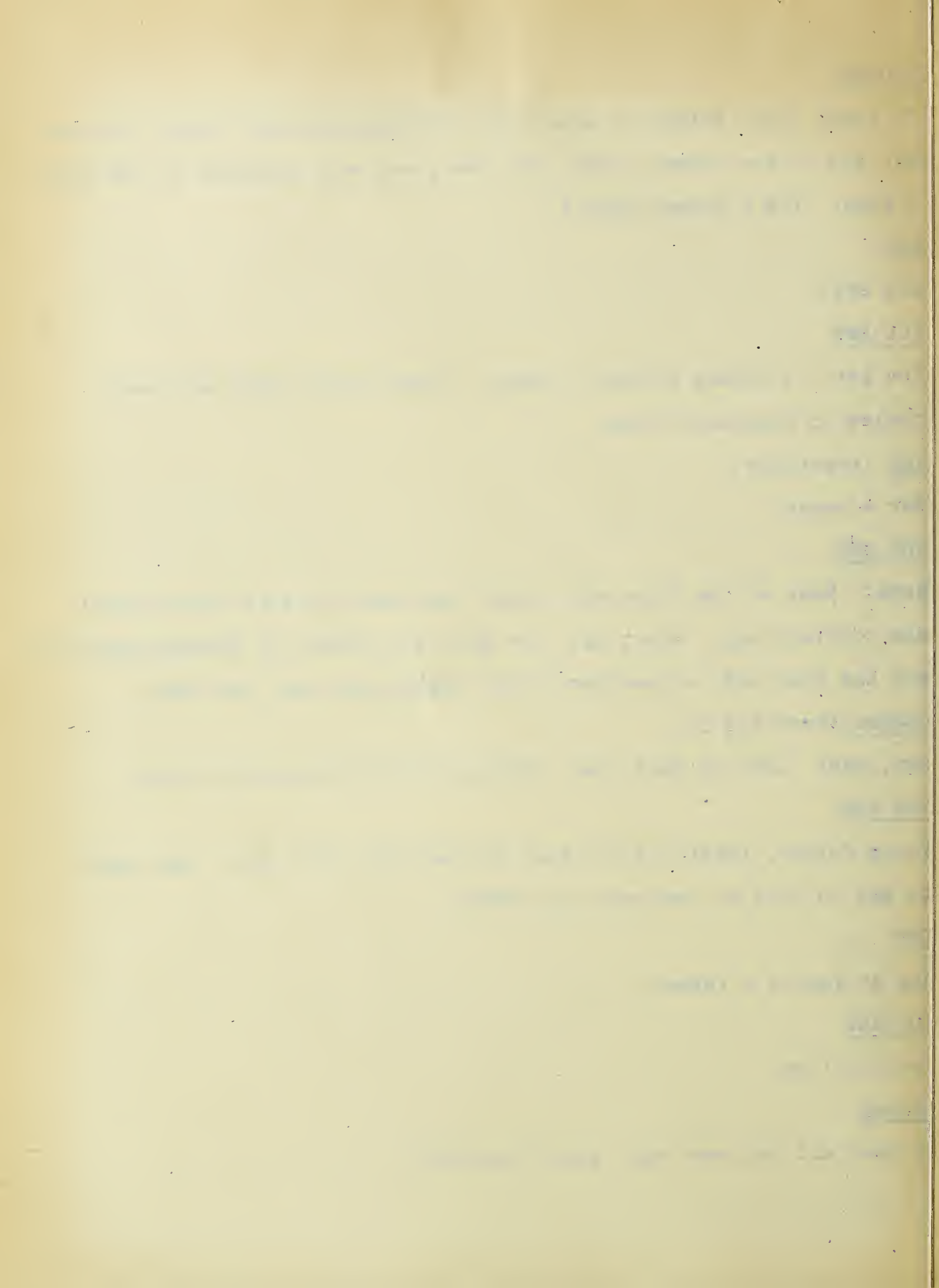
And so you're a farmer.

YOU BET

You bet I am.

GEORGE

Is that all you ever say, just "you bet"?



YOU BET

I said more'n that the last time the trip hammer on the hay buck hit me on the shin bone. (SERIOUSLY) Pardner, I reckon you're thinking what I'm thinking....

DON

We're both farmers....

YOU BET

And we both got outfits....

GEORGE

I got a 22 rifle.

DON

Shake hands with Ed McGee, pardner.

YOU BET

You bet.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading into....

SOUND: Boards being nailed together...

DON (Shouting slightly)

Got it down there, You Bet?

YOU BET (slightly off mike)

You bet I have.

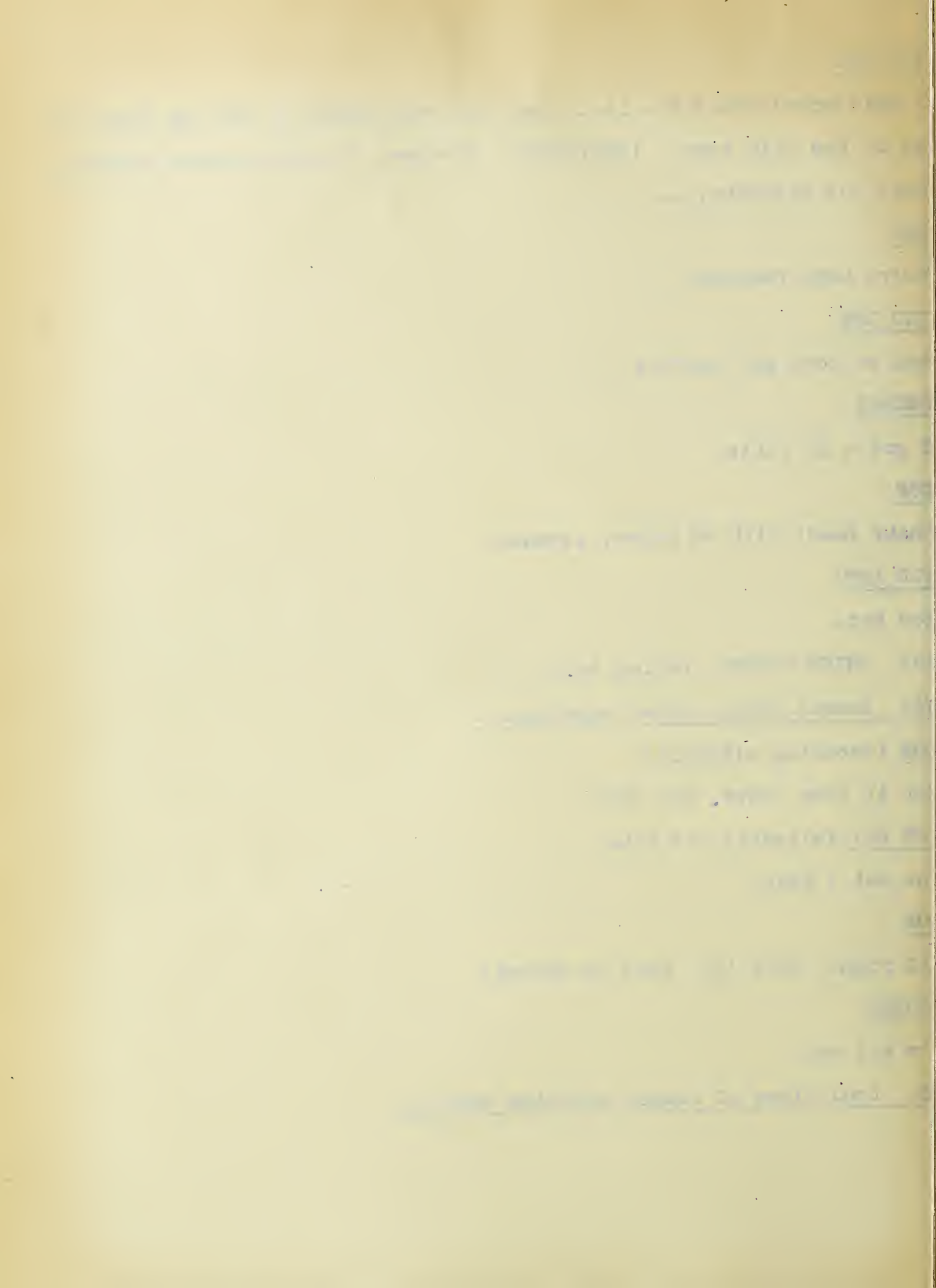
DON

All right, hold it! Hold on George!

GEORGE

I'm all set.

SOUND: Loud blows of hammer striking wood....



DON

There! Another day'n we'll have all the plates on.

YOU BET

What d'ya mean, another day? We'll have 'em on by nightfall. Come on!

DON

Suits me.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading into....

SOUND: Night noises...

YOU BET

George, you look a wee bit tired.

GEORGE

Who, me? Why, I'm still rarin' to go. (SINGS MOCKINGLY)

"Hooocome, home on the raaaange...

Where the deeeer and the cantelope play.....

Where seldom is....."

DON

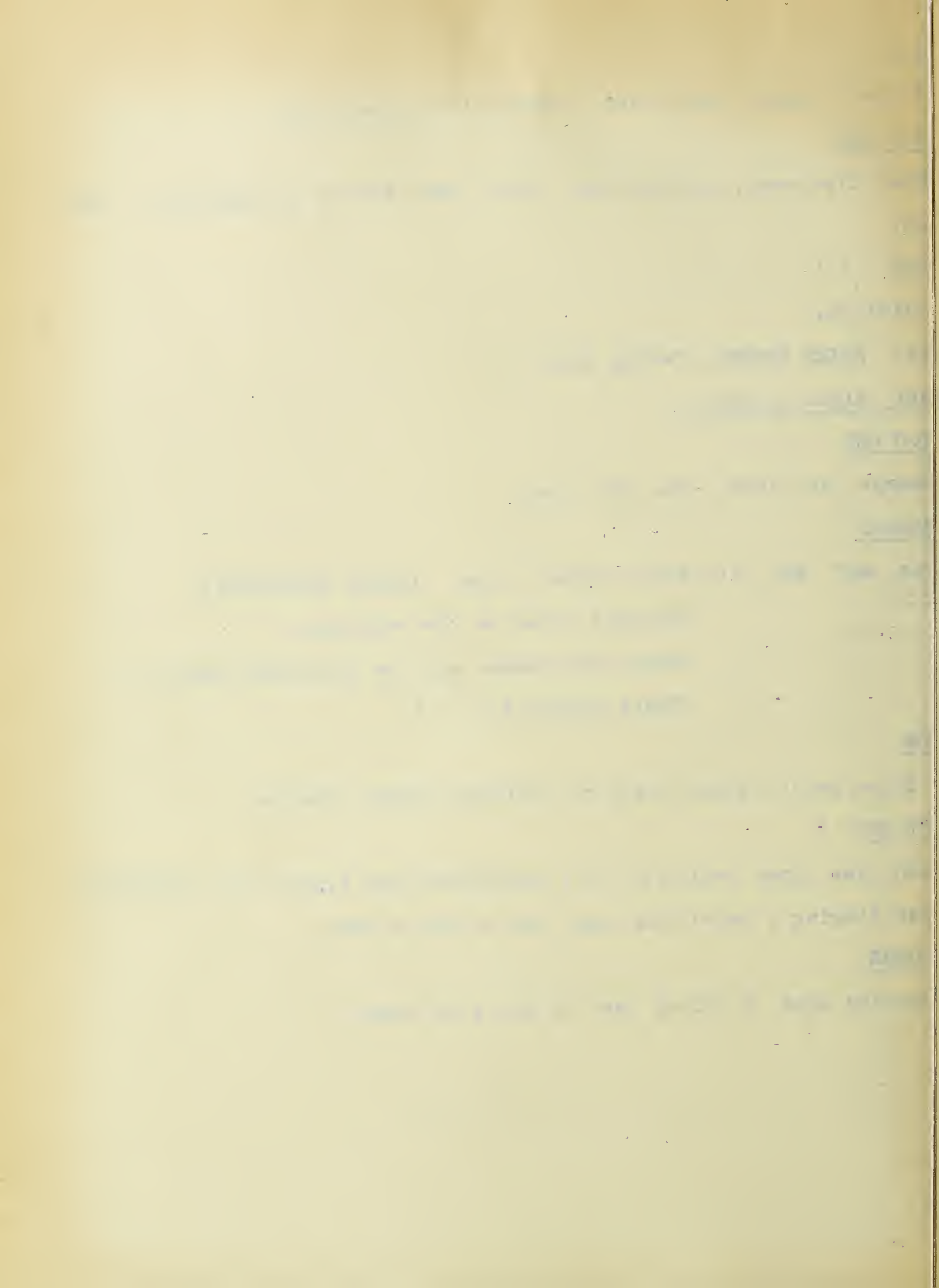
I think you'd better stick to building houses, George.

YOU BET

Yeah, you kinda remind me of a petrified bird settin' in a petrified tree singing a petrified song, you do for a fact.

GEORGE

Just the same, I did my part of the work today.



YOU BET

You bet you did, son, as much as any of us. You know, that was one thing that licked the first folks that tried to farm this valley after the loggers left--they didn't have the right kind of houses. Then they didn't take care of the land. They didn't remove the stumps. They left the high land to blow, and wash, and the low land wasn't allowed to drain.

DON

I reckon you and I feel the same way about the soil, You Bet. It's the most precious thing we have.

YOU BET

You bet it is. It's that and more. I've been here in Montana long enough to watch it. You see, this is a mining and stock-raising state by rights. At first the ranchers despised the "honyaks", as they called the farmers", but that feeling has changed. Now there's more of a get-together feeling -- a feeling of brotherhood.

DON

We ought to organize.

YOU BET

You bet. But not organize one of these rabble-rousing groups that's always hollering how the farmer is mistreated. What we need is a group that can get their heads together, figure things out, and then do it. Look -- as a group, maybe we could borrow some of those bulldozers they're finished with at Fort Peck. As an organization, it could get help in drainage, it could get a Farm Security Administration loan -- that's what those loans are for, for folks like us that are willing to help ourselves. You see what I mean?

DON (slowly, thoughtfully)

And then we'd have good land of our own....self respect....a greater America!

ORGAN: BEGIN MONTAGE

ANNOUNCER

Pull the stumps, drain the land!

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

Farm the sloping land in strips!

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

Level the land, develop the water facilities!

ORGAN: UP

ANNOUNCER

Defend -- the soil!

ORGAN: UP AND OUT

SOUND: Street noises, fading down...

DON

Well, I'll tell you what. I'll meet the pack and passel of you here at straight up eight. All right?

YOU BET

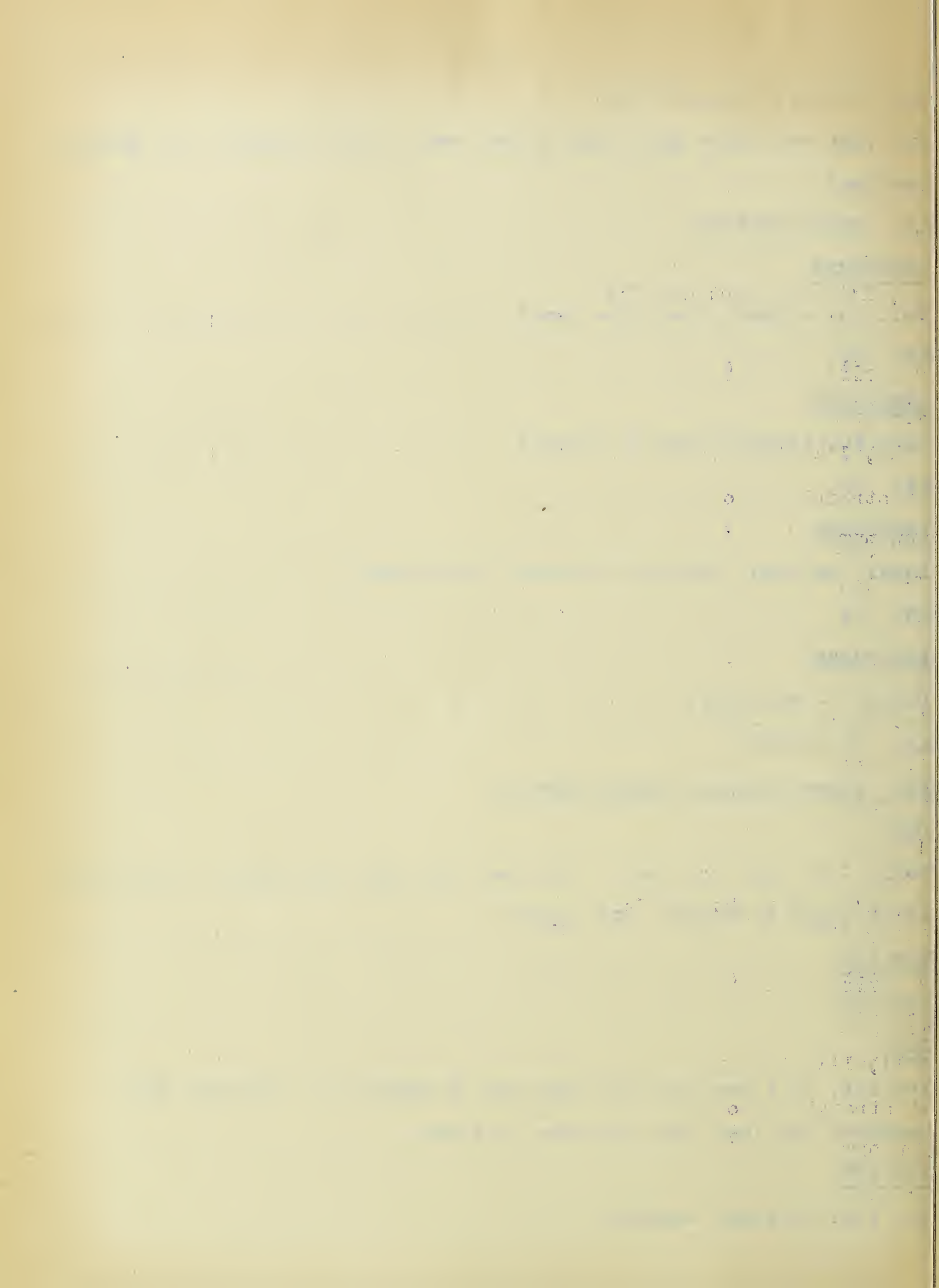
You bet.

DON

You bet, if I were you I'd stay out of Murphy's. You know what happened the last time you were in there.

YOU BET

Oh, I'll be right careful.



DON

And as for you, George, don't you let Judith and Ellen out of your sight.

GEORGE

Aw, Gee, they always have to tag along.

DON

You heard what I said.

GEORGE

Yes, sir.

DON (fading off)

All right. I'll see you at eight.

GEORGE

Say, You Bet, I wonder where he's going? And how come he brought those flowers from our garden.

Y OU BET

The best thing for you to do is to keep your ideas to yourself. Now you run along with the kids to the show.

GEORGE (fading off)

Okay. Come on, you brats. Blow your nose, Judith...

SOUND: Street noises gradually fade out completely...

SOUND: Crunching of man's footsteps, all else quiet...

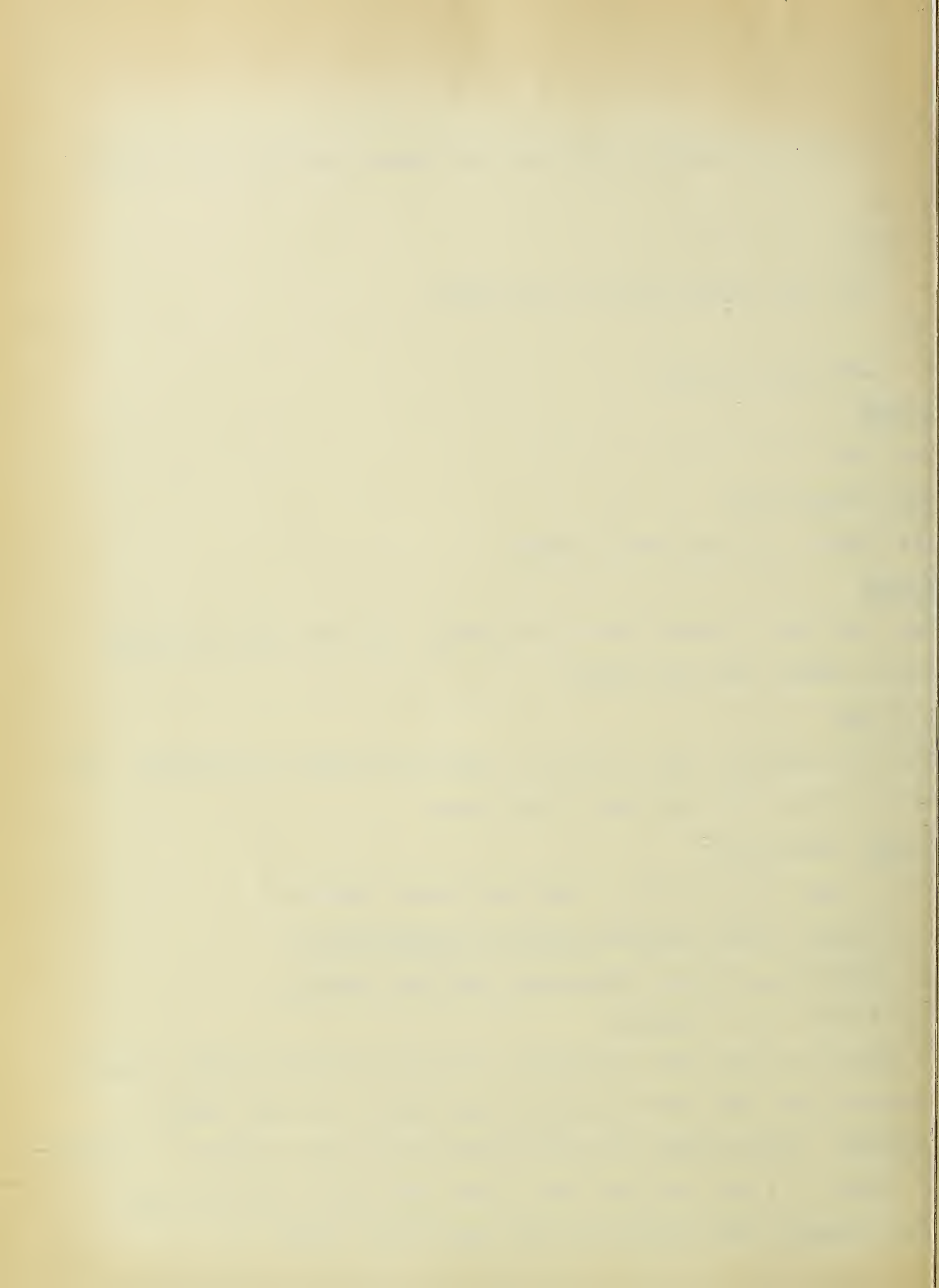
DON (softly, as to himself)

It should be along here somewhere, if I've calculated right...there! Beaten by the rain and the wind of two years, but still there....

(READING) "Sarah McGee, the best wife and the best mother..." (SOBBING)

Oh, Sarah. If you could see the little home we've built for you.

These flowers, they came from your own garden, Sarah.



SARAH (over filter mike)

I will always be with you and the children, Don. I will always be with you in Flathead Valley. Yes, I have seen what you have done -- and what you have done, others can do. Remember when we trudged along here, Don? The valley was a desolate waste, and we were stragglers battling a totally new environment for a working chance at security. Flathead Valley can't be shared by everyone, but there is peace and security somewhere, for the man who loves the soil, and is willing to work for it -- just as you have made the stump lands bloom again.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

This is the 187th consecutive episode of "Fortunes Washed Away" brought to you through the Dayton, Ohio office of the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. And now, the so-called "Eleventh Commandment".

ORGAN: Sneak in DEEP RIVER THEME.

ANNOUNCER

"Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

